

Unexploded ordnance and munitions may lie on or within the floor of the Salton Sea over the 12,200 acre area where the bombing targets previously existed. This area includes two targets (sites 10MA and 10MB) used by the AEC and Strategic Air Command. Items likely to be found at those sites include WW-II era practice bombs, atomic shape bombs, or small explosive components and/or spotting charges. Ordnance in the Salton Sea may be the result of drops from U.S. Army planes aiming for site 10LA (land target), Navy planes aiming for skip bombing target G, U.S. Navy planes aiming for another water target, or accidental drops (USACE, 1996).

A salvage operation using divers was conducted in 1960 at the water target areas within the SSTB used for bomb practice with atomic weapon test units (DTSC EnviroStor database; USACE 1996). The salvage operation removed 10,000 pounds of material that was returned to Albuquerque for identification. In 1961, U.S. Navy divers conducted an extensive underwater search, recovering a practice bomb as well as an atomic bomb shape. Any residual materials that were not removed by these salvaged operations are most likely buried deep in mud, below 35 feet of water (USACE, 1996). No records were obtained indicating that ordnance clearance and decontamination occurred at the bomb target sites outside the SSTB. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers report (USACE, 1996) on the sites recommended further assessment of Ordnance and Explosive Waste for these sites. Historical records specify “no restoration required other than target removal” for the practice bomb targets (USACE FUDS database). However, it is unclear whether these recommendations were based only on considerations for removal of visual evidence of the bomb targets or whether they also accounted for clearance of practice bombs from the Sea Bed.

Radioactivity

Experiments using non-explosive atomic bomb weapon test units were carried out in 1944 as part of the Manhattan Project to determine the best shape for the weapon. Test units were made of cast steel or aluminum, and filled with concrete or lead, although a limited number of test units were also reported to have contained depleted uranium ballast (USACE, 1996).